

A trifecta of temerity

By Colin McNickle

Saturday, April 12, 2014 9:00 p.m.

Conservative pundit Cal Thomas has “concerns about the amount of money required in campaigns, especially presidential campaigns.” In his USA Today column last week, Mr. Thomas seemed aghast that Barack Obama and Mitt Romney spent a combined \$7 billion on their 2012 campaigns.

One can only wonder if he's similarly affrighted that Americans spent \$6.9 billion on Halloween last year. Is he equally bothered that, also in 2012, Americans spent \$478 billion on groceries; \$117 billion on fast food; \$96 billion on beer; \$65 billion on soft drinks; \$47 billion on child care; \$40 billion on lawn care; nearly \$35 billion on gambling; \$30 billion at the local dollar store; \$25 billion on professional sports; \$17 billion on video games; nearly \$17 billion on Easter and \$10 billion on romance novels?

That \$7 billion looks paltry by comparison. And hand-wringing over it is silly. ...

“Progressivism” was in full farce Thursday last as President Obama commemorated the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The president that logic forgot went on to tout as a grand success Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs of deepening dependence, poverty preservation and Orwellian doublespeaking. Among them — Medicare, Medicaid, Head Start and food stamps.

Never mind that Medicare and Medicaid are ticking time bombs of fiscal unsustainability rife with fraud and programmatic oxymorons. Never mind that Head Start is nothing more than a glorified federal baby-sitting service with, by the government's own assessment, little or no cognitive benefits. And never mind that the effectiveness of food stamps, the program's rolls massively expanded over the years and food stamp use ignorantly promoted as a “growth” generator, is dubious at best.

“The academic evidence is quite mixed ... in either combating hunger or improving nutrition,” Cato Institute scholar Michael Tanner reminded last year. “Even the Government Accountability Office concedes that the ‘literature is inconclusive as to whether SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) alleviates hunger and malnutrition for low-income households.’”

To which most garden-variety “progressives” will retort: “Well, we must not be spending enough money!”

Well, all sizzle, no steak and little intellectual wherewithal typically are part and parcel of “progressivism.” ...

“Thank you, Vladimir. May I have another, SIR?!” That might as well have been what Secretary of Stumble, er, State John Forbes Kerry asked the shirtless and expansionist Russian megalomaniac last week in Washington.

As The Wall Street Journal noted, on the same day that the proprietor (in absentia) of Fox Chapel's Rosemont Farm was lowering his affectatious voice and sternly fidgeting with his spectacles before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee over Russia's Ukraine intentions, “the Pentagon announced steep cuts to U.S. nuclear forces, four years ahead of schedule, in accordance with the 2010 New START treaty with Russia.”

Never mind, remember, that Russia has been treating its treaty obligations like toilet paper, grossly violating older treaty provisions as it negotiated new provisions that it planned to ignore, too. We cut, early; they ramp up, continually. Surely Mr. Kerry is delirious from a Rosemont-contracted swine flu. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel must have been over for dinner.

Emptiness and quackery passing for diplomacy are leaving the United States in an embarrassing and dangerous position.